



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS

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## FACT SHEET

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# Domestic Abuse Self-Help Tribal Project

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has established the Domestic Abuse Self-Help Tribal Project which can help litigants obtain restraining orders in tribal courts and state courts. In this project, a non lawyer works, under the supervision of an attorney – known as the “reviewing attorney,” to assist a tribal agency’s customer. The attorney, from any location, supervises the non lawyer through the use of technology, training, and a review of the non lawyer’s work.

### Benefits

The benefits of this project are:

- Tribal advocates can get legal assistance for their customers while giving them other traditional services, including safety planning and social services.
- Litigants do not need to travel to an attorney or self-help center, but can get help from a tribal advocate anywhere in California.
- Litigants, with the help of their advocates, are connected to a network legal services so that they may obtain additional assistance with their restraining order case and also deal with other legal matters (like obtaining a divorce).

### How Does the Domestic Abuse Self-Help Tribal Project Work?

The advocate operates a computer program (provided by the AOC and its legal services partners and adapted for use by the California state and tribal courts) that provides questions and information for the advocate. The advocate asks the program questions and enters the client’s answers into the program. The advocate also reads information from the program to the client and answers any questions the client has. The program can also direct an advocate, in an appropriate case, to contact a reviewing attorney to obtain additional assistance. When the advocate and survivor complete the program’s interview, the program prepares all of the court forms needed to file for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order.

The advocate emails these forms to a reviewing attorney for review. The attorney is typically located many miles from the client and advocate. The attorney reviews the court forms, asks questions of the advocate and the client, and makes changes to the client’s court forms.

When a review is complete, the attorney emails the court forms back to the advocate. The advocate finishes preparing the papers for filing and helps the client with the next steps in the legal process.

### Getting a Domestic Abuse Self-Help Tribal Project in Your Community

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) staff will work with any tribal court, affiliated tribal advocacy center, or other tribal agency to give access, training, and technical assistance to be able to implement this project and give access to legal assistance in tribal communities that may be remote from the state courthouse. The AOC, along with its legal services partner at Law Help Interactive, will provide the computer program and tailor it to meet the needs of clients in a state court or tribal court. The AOC can also assist in providing computers and Internet services for non-profit organizations that work with domestic violence clients. The AOC can also provide training for advocates and reviewing attorneys. The AOC staff will also provide on-going support for projects throughout California.

This method of providing assistance can be used in other types of cases, for example civil harassment, elder or dependent adult abuse, guardianship and conservatorship cases.

#### Additional Resources:

California Courts Law Help Interactive programs:

<http://www.courts.ca.gov/partners/116.htm>

Law Help Interactive web site: <https://lawhelpinteractive.org/>

#### Further Information

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